

**Long Island Sound Watershed Regional Conservation Partnership Program –
Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) – Agricultural Land Easement (ALE)**

Pre-Screening Application Form

A. LISW – RCPP – Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) – Agricultural Land Easement (ALE) Pre-Screening Applicant Contact Information

1. LANDOWNER CONTACT INFORMATION

Landowner Name:
Landowner Mailing Address:

2. PARCEL INFORMATION

Parcel location (Street, Town, State)
Assessors Map-Block-Lot Number:
Assessors’ Lot acreage:
Project Title:

3. CONSERVATION ORGANIZATION CONTACT INFORMATION

Point of Contact Name:
Point of Contact Position:
Organization Name:
Organization Mailing Address:
Point of Contact Email Address:

B. LISW – RCPP – ACEP - ALE Complete Application Contents List

Please check the box for each application elements included in your application packet:

1. LISW-RCPP ACEP-ALE Pre-Screening Application Form (pages 1-6)	
2. NRCS Form NRCS-CPA 1200, Conservation Program Application	
3. Assessor’s Map showing parcel and Map, Block, Lot Numbers and Acres	
4. Locus Map, GIS Map, or Screen Shot of Online map tool showing parcel’s location in relation to Eligibility and Ranking Criteria	
5. Letter(s) of Landowner Intent	
6. Any long-term forest management plan associated with the parcel/project	
7. Any farm succession plan or similar plan established to address farm viability for future generations.	

C. LISW – RCPP – ACEP- ALE Pre-Screening Application Eligibility Criteria

Please indicate in the right column in the table whether the project fulfills the LISW-RCPP-ACEP-ALE Eligibility Criteria (as described in the RFP) by checking off each criterion fulfilled by your project. *If the answer to any of the following criteria is "no," the application is ineligible for program enrollment.*

	Yes or No
1. Is the applicant an eligible entity? (See Eligibility Criteria in the RFP)	
2. Does the landowner have clear title to the land? (Note: if the land is under the state’s current use program then this associated encumbrance needs to be subordinated to the NRCS easement. Contact the NRCS State Conservationist for more information.	
3. Is the parcel of land within the Long Island Sound Watershed and within the State of Vermont, State of Rhode Island, State of Connecticut, or the Commonwealth of Massachusetts? <i>(Use the LISW-RCPP-ACEP-ALE online map tool to compare the parcel’s location to the boundaries of the LI Sound Watershed)</i>	
4. Does the applicant understand that NRCS will provide up to 50% of the appraised value of the agricultural land easement? Other funding sources (non-federal) will cover the rest.	
5. Does the eligible entity have known or likely sources for the funding outside of that covered by NRCS?	
6. The percent of the parcel’s area covered in forest does not exceed 99%.	
7. Is the offered parcel: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Private or Tribal Land that is agricultural land (includes forests)? b. Subject to a written pending offer for purchase of an ALE from an eligible entity? 	
8. Does the offered parcel meet at least one of the four criteria? If so, write the letter(s) of the criterion in the box to the right. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Has soils classified as prime, unique, or other protected soil (see Appendix for soil criteria (VT only) if applying under this category). b. Contains historical or archaeological resources. c. Enrolling the land would protect grazing uses and related conservation values by restoring and conserving land. d. Protecting the land will further a State or local policy consistent with the purposes of ACEP. 	
9. Is the land one of the following: cropland; rangeland; grassland or land that contains forbs, or shrubland for which grazing is the predominant use; located in an area that has been historically dominated by grassland, forbs, or shrubs and could provide habitat for animal or plant populations of significant ecological value; pastureland; or nonindustrial private forest land that contributes to the economic viability of an offered parcel or serves as a buffer to protect such land from development?	

D. LISW – RCPP – ACEP- ALE Pre-Screening Application Ranking Criteria – Part 1 – National Criteria

Please provide the information as indicated for each criterion below to the best of your ability. For some of the questions, you may refer to the [online mapping tool](#) and table in the Appendix which should help. **Criteria that can be measured via geographic information systems will be by the LISW-RCPP Forest Land Protection Technical Committee (LISW-RCPP), which means actual scores for GIS- and Census- related questions will not hinge on the precision of responses below.**

National Criteria	Percentage, Number of Acres, Etc.
1. Percent of prime, unique, and important farmland (by soils) in the parcel to be protected. Will also be measured by LISW-RCPP.	
2. Percentage change in the acres of permanent grassland, pasture, and rangeland, other than cropland and woodland pasture, in the county in which the parcel is located between the last two USDA Censuses of Agriculture (USDA - NASS - Census of Agriculture) (Please see table in the appendix where points are pre-calculated for each county)	
3. Percent of cropland, pastureland, grassland, and rangeland in the parcel to be protected (i.e., open land) (Use online mapping tool and select the Imagery base map to provide an estimate).	
4. Ratio of the total acres of land in the parcel to be protected to average farm size in the county according to the most recent USDA Census of Agriculture (USDA - NASS - Census of Agriculture) (Please see table in the appendix where points are pre-calculated for each county)	
5. Decrease in the percentage of acreage of farm in the county in which the parcel is located between the last two USDA Censuses of Agriculture (USDA - NASS - Census of Agriculture) (Please see table in the appendix where points are pre-calculated for each county)	
6. Percent population growth in the county as documented by the most recent United States Census (Census Bureau Home Page) (Please see table in the appendix where points are pre-calculated for each county)	
7. Population density (population per square mile) as documented by the most recent United States Census (Census Bureau Home Page) (Please see table in the appendix where points are pre-calculated for each county)	
8. Is there an active farm succession plan or similar plan established to address farm viability for future generations? Yes or No	
9. Proximity (distance in miles) of the parcel to other protected land, including military installations, parks, National Forest, and conservation easements (note the acreage of that other protected land). Will also be measured by LISW-RCPP.	

10. The proximity (distance in miles) of the parcel to other agricultural operations and agricultural infrastructure (note the acreage of that other agricultural land). Will also be measured by LISW-RCPP, but local knowledge is important here.	
11. Number of sides the parcel abuts other contiguous acres protected and devoted to agricultural use. Will also be measured by LISW-RCPP.	
12. Is the parcel currently enrolled in CRP in a contract that is set to expire within a year? Yes or No	
13. Does the parcel contain a Grassland of Special Environmental Significance (ALE-GSS) that will benefit from the protection under the long-term easement? Yes or No Please contact the following NRCS Conservationists directly: Obediah Racicot, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, USDA/NRCS – Colchester, VT, (802) 951-6796 x 228, Obediah.racicot@vt.usda.gov; Rita Thibodeau, Acting Assistance State Conservationist, USDA – NRCS, Amherst, MA, (413) 253-4379, rita.thibodeau@usda.gov; Joyce Purcell, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, USDA – NRCS – Tolland, CT, (860) 871-4028, joyce.purcell@ct.usda.gov; Brunilda Velez, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, USDA – NRCS – Warwick, RI, (401) 822-8820, brunilda.velez@ri.usda.gov.	

E. LISW – RCPP – ACEP- ALE Pre-Screening Application Ranking Criteria – Part 2 – State/LISW-RCPP Criteria

Please answer each of the questions below to the best of your ability. For some of the questions, you may refer to the [online mapping tool](#) and census tables in the Appendix which should help. **Criteria that can be measured via geographic information systems will be by the LISW-RCPP.**

State/LISW-RCPP Criteria	Percentage, Number of Acres, Etc.
<p>1. The application package contains a long-term (10+ years) forest management plan completed by a professional forester and a landowner statement of intent (letter) signifying their willingness to have land managed for commercial harvests or other economic gain. If the land is currently enrolled in the Vermont Use Value Appraisal (UVA) Program, the Massachusetts Forest Tax Program Chapter 61 (Ch.61), Connecticut PA-490 (490), or the Rhode Island Farm, Forest and Open Space Program (RIGL 44-27), note this fact in the landowner statement of intent.</p> <p>a. Does the application package contain a long-term (10+ years) forest management plan completed by a professional forester: Yes or No</p>	

<p>b. Does the application package contain a landowner statement of intent (letter) signifying their willingness to have land managed for commercial harvests or other economic gain: Yes or No</p> <p>c. Is the land currently enrolled in UVA, Ch.61, 490, or RIGL 44-27? Yes or No If Yes, note this fact in the landowner statement of intent.</p>	
<p>2. What are the number of acres of forestland and farmland in the LI Sound Watershed and in Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, or Rhode Island? Will also be measured by LISW-RCPP.</p>	
<p>3. What percent of prime, unique, and important farmland is in the parcel to be protected? (See Appendix for VT Waiver for Soils).</p>	
<p>4. What percent of cropland, pastureland, grassland, and rangeland in the parcel is to be protected (i.e., open land)? Use online mapping tool and select the Imagery base map to provide an estimate. Will also be measured by LISW-RCPP.</p>	
<p>5. The number of acres in an area defined as within 100 feet of the bank of a stream, river, or other waterbody the protection of which would contribute to overall water quality of the surface and groundwater. Use online mapping tool to estimate. Will also be measured by LISW-RCPP.</p>	
<p>6. The number of acres within a surface drinking water source protection area or watershed. Due to security issues, most states do not allow “drinking water source protection areas” at the parcel level to be made available to the public. In order to determine whether the parcel you are interested in conserving is located in a designated “drinking water source protection area,” please contact Kira Jacobs directly: Kira Jacobs, Source Water Protection Program, U.S. EPA, 617-918-1817, jacobs.kira@epa.gov</p>	
<p>7. The number of acres in an area defined as having above average resiliency to climate change. Use online mapping tool. Will also be measured by LISW-RCPP.</p>	

<p>8. The number of acres in an area defined as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Being within or abutting areas containing habitat or core forests prioritized by state agencies (State Wildlife and Forest Action Plans); b. Included in the CT River Watershed Landscape Conservation Design (connecttheconnecticut.org) Tier 1 Cores, Tier 2 Cores, or Connectors, or Nature’s Network Cores or Connectors; c. Prioritized by Regional Conservation Partnerships or other large landscape conservation or stewardship initiatives. (Applicant needs to provide evidence (map) for 8c.). <p>Use the online map tool to compare the parcel’s approximate location to these conservation area designations. Will also be measured by LISW-RCPP.</p>	
<p>9. Does the parcel protect high sensitivity historical or archaeological features? Yes or No</p> <p>In order to determine whether the parcel you are interested in conserving contains “high sensitivity historical or archaeological features,” please contact NRCS Conservationists directly: Obediah Racicot, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, USDA/NRCS – Colchester, VT, (802) 951-6796 x 228, Obediah.racicot@vt.usda.gov; Rita Thibodeau, Acting Assistance State Conservationist, USDA – NRCS, Amherst, MA, (413) 253-4379, rita.thibodeau@usda.gov; Joyce Purcell, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, USDA – NRCS – Tolland, CT, (860) 871-4028, joyce.purcell@ct.usda.gov; Brunilda Velez, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, USDA – NRCS – Warwick, RI, (401) 822-8820, brunilda.velez@ri.usda.gov.</p>	
<p>10. Parcel ability to maximize the protection of contiguous acres devoted to forest habitat or forest products.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> d. Does the parcel abut other protected lands managed for forest products? Yes or No e. If no, is it within ¼ mile? Yes or No f. Does the parcel abut other protected lands managed for forest habitat? Yes or No g. If no, is it within ¼ mile? Yes or No h. Does the parcel abut other protected lands managed for both forest products and forest habitat? Yes or No 	

Comments:

APPENDIX

NRCS Vermont Waiver Area for Soils:

440-528.33(8)(1)(i). Land Eligibility requires that for ACEP-ALE parcels being enrolled under the Soils, category consist of at least 50 percent combination of prime, unique, or statewide important soils in order to be eligible for participation in the program. 440-528.33(8)(1)(ii) allows for the State Conservationist with the advice of the State Technical Committee, to increase or decrease the required percentage of prime, unique, or statewide important soils for a specific area or region of the state.

The majority of Vermont's prime and statewide important soils are located in the Lake

Champlain and Connecticut River Valley Major Land Resource Areas MLRA 142 and 145 (For more information on MLRA locations see <http://soils.usda.gov/survey/geography/mlra/>).

Vermont's soils distribution on its topography and historically small farms have made meeting the 50 percent requirement challenging. Landowners and their productive forms outside these MLRA areas are at a competitive disadvantage for participation in ACEP-ALE under Criteria I. For farmland located outside these MLRAs to be eligible under the Vermont NRCS General Waiver, parcels submitted for consideration must contain no less than **35 percent** prime, unique, statewide or locally important soils and must include an explanation regarding one or more of the following factors:

- The viability of the farm due to size and access to market infrastructure.
- Contributions of the farm to the state's agricultural industry, or
- Conservation of compatible natural resources.

Applicants are encouraged to provide additional information for Vermont NRCS State Conservationist to consider when reviewing requests for soils waivers, specifically whether the application:

- Provides a significant environmental benefit beyond what is normally provided by these projects (ecosystem services, carbon sequestration, etc.).
- Leverages a much larger conservation project than what is specific to the application (contiguous habitat or important state lands, etc.).
- Adds a significant amount of land to an already conserved block of land.

Appendix: County point scores for National Ranking Criteria 2 through 7

County	State	POINTS_NRF2	CntyAveFarmSize	POINTS_NRF4	POINTS_NRF5	POINTS_NRF6	POINTS_NRF7
		Points for National Ranking Criteria 2: Percent change of grassland, pasture, and rangeland... See worksheet for how to score	National Ranking Criteria 4: County's Average Farm Size (Acres - 2012 to 2017 VT; 2007-2012 MA and RI).	Parcel Dependent: Points for National Ranking Criteria 4: You must divide your project's acreage by the counties average farm size (from column to left) to get a ratio. Enter 0 points if the ratio is less than or equal to 1.0; enter 15 points if the ratio is greater than 1.0	Points for National Ranking Criteria 5: Percent change in acreage of farm and ranch land in the county.	Points For National Ranking Criteria 6: Percent population change in the county.	Points for National Ranking Criteria 7: Population density (population per square mile).
Fairfield, CT	CT	5	130		10	10	5
Hartford, CT	CT	5	61		15	0	5
Litchfield, CT	CT	5	74		10	0	0
Middlesex, CT	CT	10	37		15	0	0
New Haven, CT	CT	10	39		15	0	5
New London, CT	CT	5	73		15	0	0
Tolland, CT	CT	10	69		15	0	0
Windham, CT	CT	10	80		15	0	0
Berkshire County, MA	MA	0	123		15	0	0
Franklin County, MA	MA	0	106		0	0	0
Hampden County, MA	MA	0	69		0	0	0
Hampshire County, MA	MA	0	73		0	0	0
Middlesex County, MA	MA	0	44		15	2	10
Worcester County, MA	MA	5	61		10	0	0
Kent County, RI	RI	5	87		0	0	0
Providence County, RI	RI	0	43		0	2	5
Washington County, RI	RI	5	62		0	0	0
Addison County, VT	VT	10	236		15	2	0
Bennington County, VT	VT	10	132		15	0	0
Caledonia County, VT	VT	5	149		0	0	0
Essex County, VT	VT	0	404		0	0	0
Orange County, VT	VT	5	150		15	2	0
Orleans County, VT	VT	10	230		10	0	0
Rutland County, VT	VT	10	161		15	0	5
Washington County, VT	VT	3	117		10	0	5
Windham County, VT	VT	10	108		15	0	0
Windsor County, VT	VT	3	166		0	0	0